

## TITLE OF THE INVENTION

## FOOTWEAR COMBINING COMFORT WITH FASHION

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

## 5 1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to footwear, and in particular to an article of footwear which provides a elevated heel with comfort.

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATED ART

10 Footwear is typically divided into formal footwear and leisure footwear. Formal footwear oftentimes provides a elevated heel and aesthetic characteristics, such as sharp edges, pointed edges tooled or punched leather surfaces, and/or patent leather surfaces. Typically, formal footwear sacrifices comfort for fashion, since such footwear is not worn during recreational, leisure, and/or lengthy activities, but rather is worn for brief  
15 periods, such as for social events including cocktail parties, or during working hours within an office.

In contrast, leisure footwear typically provides a low heel for ease of movement and comfort, and includes materials designed to provide cushioning for the foot during commuting between work and home, or for errands which require standing on one's feet  
20 for extended periods of time, such as shopping or gardening, or for recreational and sporting activities, or for attending children's events such as soccer games. In this manner, leisure footwear sacrifices fashion for comfort.

A need exists for an article of women's footwear which combines both comfort and fashion.

In addition, leisure footwear may be in the form of sneakers or sandals. Sneakers may provide more comfort and higher heels than sandals, for example, to support the arches, but typically a sneaker substantially encloses the foot, and so reduces the ability of the foot to breathe. Sneakers also typically require some form of fastener, such as lacing or "VELCRO<sup>®</sup>", to secure the sneaker to the foot, and so sneakers are not as easy to remove from or to secure to the foot as sandals are.

In contrast, sandals are more open than sneakers, allowing the foot to breathe and to be less restricted during walking. Also, sandals typically use thongs which fit between at least one pair of toes to cause the sandal to be quickly secured but relatively easy to remove from the foot, for example, to allow the wearer to quickly slip them off and jump into a pool without the hassle of untying the lacing or any other type fastener. However, sandals typically provide minimal cushioning, such as foam or a sponge-like insole, and the insole is relatively flat. Accordingly, sandals may be less comfortable and more harmful to the arches of the wearer's foot than sneakers.

A need exists for an article of women's footwear which improves comfort and health considerations, such as foot breathability and arch support.

20

## BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

What has been invented is an article of women's footwear which provides cushioning for comfort as well as a relatively elevated heel composed of durable material for providing fashionable characteristics as well as arch support. Such footwear may be

worn by women but so comfortable that men may even wear such footwear, and also to enhance one's height and appearance as well as comfort.

The article of footwear includes a sole having a front portion and a rear portion, a heel positioned over the rear portion of the sole, an insole positioned on top of the heel and the front portion of the sole, a cushion positioned on a rear portion of the insole above the heel, and a strap attached to the insole for removably securing at least the insole to the foot of a wearer. The heel has a height greater than the thickness of the insole. A fastener removably attaches a portion of the strap to the insole, and is a hook-and-loop fastener. The heel could be composed of hardened plastic.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

Preferred embodiments of the invention are disclosed hereinbelow with reference to the drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a top right partial perspective view of the disclosed article of footwear;

FIG. 2 is a bottom view of the footwear;

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view of the footwear along lines 3-3 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is a top left cut-away perspective view of the footwear along lines 3-3 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 5 is a left side elevational view of the heel;

FIG. 6 is a left side elevational view of the footwear;

FIG. 7 is a left side elevational view of the cushioning for the ball of the foot;

FIG. 8 is a left side cross-sectional view of the sole of the footwear;

FIG. 9 is a top plan view of the footwear;

FIG. 10 is a top left perspective view of a strap configuration;  
FIG. 11 is a top left perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the footwear; and  
FIG. 12 is a top left perspective view of another alternative embodiment of the  
5 footwear.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

As shown in FIGS. 1-12, an article 10 of footwear is disclosed which combines and enhances the various comfort, fashion, and health considerations of both formal and  
10 leisure footwear, such as breathability, appearance, and arch support, of footwear for multiple uses, such as commuting, everyday leisure and recreational activities, and social events such as parties. The article 10 of footwear may be used by wearers of either gender, although the relatively elevated heel 12 of the footwear, acting as a high heel, is a feature typically used by women.

15 FIG. 1 is a top right partial perspective view of the disclosed article 10 of footwear having the relatively elevated heel 12, which may be a high heel, atop the sole 14, with a cushion 16 above the heel 12 for supporting the ankle and the ball of the foot. In an example embodiment, the heel 12 extends from the rear portion of the article 10 toward the front portion thereof, for example, to partially extend to the intermediate  
20 portion of the sole 14 and/or the insole 38 or inner sole, allowing the heel 12 to provide arch support to the middle of the foot of the wearer.

Unlike known high-heeled shoes and formal footwear which have a sole substantially adjacent to the insole with the heel extending downward from the sole and

located only at the rear of the footwear, the present article 10 of footwear has the heel 12 positioned between the intermediate and/or rear portions of the sole 14 and the insole 38.

A configuration of straps 18-22 allow the article 10 to be relatively open, to enhance breathability of the foot as well as to allow the article 10 to be easy to wear  
5 and/or to be readily removed from the foot.

The heel 12 is composed of a durable material, such as plastic or other materials as described herein, and may optionally include at least one aperture, such as apertures 24, 26 passing through the heel 12 from the left side to the right side of the article 10 of footwear. Alternatively or in addition, the durable material may be composed of solid  
10 colored material, with translucent material passing from the left side to the right side of the heel 12 to provide the appearance of apertures. The heel 12 may be, for example, at least two inches in height.

The heel 12 may also be adorned with a logo 28, in the form of a decal, an engraving, or a shaped aperture and/or a translucent material passing from the left side to  
15 the right side of the heel 12.

FIG. 2 is a bottom view of the footwear on the bottom of the sole 14, in which at least one groove 30 is provided for flexibility, traction, and other known considerations, such as, for example, an optional predetermined logo or pattern formed by a plurality of grooves 30. The sole 14 of the heel 12 and/or the article 10 of footwear may be  
20 composed, for example, of a skid-free rubber-like material typical of such materials used in sneakers, loafers, and moccasins, as well as boots. In one example embodiment, the sole 12 may be composed of a lightweight plastic which is flexible yet sturdy with such grooves 30 formed or etched therein. However, the sole 12 is a relatively thin layer in the

vertical direction, which is wide in the front of the article 10, but slimmer towards the back, and so the width of the sole 12 substantially matches the width of the base or bottom portion 34 of the heel 12, as described herein.

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view of the heel 12 of the footwear along lines 3-3 of FIG. 1, and FIG. 4 is a top left cut-away perspective view of the footwear along lines 3-3 of FIG. 1. FIG. 5 is a left side elevational view of the heel 12. In an example embodiment, the heel 12 is, for example, about two inches in height with a wedge-shape having a slender middle portion 32 and a wider bottom portion 34 which provides both support and balance as opposed to the regular spike-heeled women's shoes. The heel 12 may be constructed using known materials which could be, for illustrative purposes, hard plastic which is durable yet flexible to a degree; leather, alligator, and other natural materials; man-made materials such as synthetics which have the appearance of wood, plastic, rubber, etc.; and rubber-like synthetics of the type used to manufacture sneakers.

In an alternative embodiment, the heel 12 may be composed of a solid mass of colored and/or painted plastic, with a translucent or transparent front portion and a solid-colored rear portion, so the overall combination of transparent and solid portions present the appearance of a spiked-heel, even though the heel 12 is solid as shown in FIGS. 1 and 3-5.

As shown in FIG. 5, the heel 12 may also include other stylistic characteristics, such as a curved rear portion 36. In the example embodiment of the article 10 of footwear, the wedge shape of the portions 32-34 and the curved rear portion 36 of the solid heel 12 present a streamlined appearance.

FIG. 6 is a left side elevational view of the footwear with the heel 12 removed for illustrative purposes, with the straps 18-22 and the cushion 16 attached to the insole 38, for example, by sewing, adhesive, or known fasteners. For example, the straps 18-22 may be attached to the insole 38 by complementary snap fasteners, buttons, buckles, magnets, and/or by hook-and-loop fasteners, such as commercially available "VELCRO®". The cushion 16 is described in greater detail in conjunction with FIG. 7, and the straps 18-22 are described in greater detail in conjunction with FIGS. 7 and 10.

As shown in FIG. 6, the insole 38 or inner sole of the article 10 of footwear is shock-resistant, and is composed of material which is durable, comfortable, and breathable. The insole 38 is capable of absorbing and/or pulling moisture away from the toes and bottom of the foot of the wearer, of massaging the ball of the foot, of cushioning the foot, and of encompassing the entire foot. The insole 38 of the article 10 of footwear is essentially comfortable so that it may be worn for long periods of time, causing no discomfort to the feet of the wearer.

FIG. 7 is a left side elevational view of the cushion 16 for the ball of the foot, which is positioned over the heel 12 and substantially adjacent to the rear portion of the insole 38, as shown in FIG. 6. The cushion 16 may be formed as extensions of the sides of the insole 38, with the cushion 16 reaching, for example, about one-half inch depth above the heel 12 to encompass at least a portion of the foot or ankle of the wearer. An optional tag 40 may be placed at the rear of the heel 12. The tag 40 may also be an extension of the insole 38, allowing the wearer to grasp the tag 40 to facilitate insertion of the foot into the cushion 16.

In an alternative embodiment, the cushion 16 shown in FIG. 7 may be a formed cup-like pad separate from the insole 38 and positioned onto the rear of the insole 38 over the heel 12. In a further alternative embodiment, the cushion 16 may form a lip extending about substantially the entire periphery of the insole 38, and so forming a low moccasin-like cushion 16 having a heel 12, with the peripheral cushion 16 enveloping the lower portions of the foot to grasp and be retained by the foot as the wearer walks. Accordingly, in this further alternative embodiment, the article 10 of footwear does not completely envelop the foot, unlike known sneakers and slippers, allowing the foot to breathe, while being retained on the foot during walking, and providing the elevated heel 12. In this further alternative embodiment, the straps 18-20 of the article 10 of footwear may be optional and/or removable, since such a peripheral cushion 16 acts to retain the article 10 on the foot.

FIG. 8 is a left side cross-sectional view of the sole 14 shown in FIG. 2, which is positioned below the insole 38. The article 10 of footwear shown in FIG. 1 may be fabricated by combining the various components shown in FIGS. 5-8, for example, by adhesive and other known footwear manufacturing methods.

In an example embodiment, the article 10 of footwear includes at least one strap, such as the straps shown in FIGS. 1, 6, and 9-10. FIG. 9 is a top plan view of the footwear, and FIG. 10 is a top left perspective view of a strap configuration, with straps 18-22 attached to the insole 38 and optionally to the cushion 16. The upper portion of the article 10 of footwear has at least two straps 18-20, each forming a half-moon shaped figure attached to one longitudinal strap 22 therebetween. A side attachment 42



composed of hook-and-loop fasteners, such as commercially available "VELCRO", is optional to be used to fasten the straps 18-22 to the insole 38 and/or to the cushion 16.

In another example embodiment, the front strap 20 may be permanently attached to the insole 38, as shown in FIG. 9, while the rear strap 18 includes at least one  
5 extension 44 extending rearward with the side attachment 42 of hook-and-loop fasteners positioned on the underside of the extension 44 for engaging a top surface 46 of the cushion 16 which may include complementary hook-and-loop fasteners.

Accordingly, the strap configuration composed of straps 18-22 may be partially removed and bent away from the rear of the article 10 of footwear to allow insertion of  
10 the foot onto the insole 38 and into the cushion 16, and then the rear strap 18 is removably fastened to the cushion 16 or insole 38 by placing the extension 44 with the hook-and-loop fasteners onto the top surface 46 having complementary hook-and-loop fasteners.

The straps 18-22 may be composed of various materials which provide flexibility,  
15 comfort, and especially elasticity. Example materials include foamy spandex, suede, leather, patent leather, cotton, etc. The straps 18-22 may be of the same color, or colored such that the colors of the straps are the opposite of or in contrast to the color of the heel  
12.

The upper or rear strap 18 of the article 10 may be attached to the upper back of  
20 the heel 12 substantially adjacent to or below the ankle of the wearer. The rear strap 18 has the optional fastener 42 which may be hook-and-loop fasteners, such as commercially available "VELCRO®", and has a detachable top half-layer forming the extension 44 which may be adjusted to fit the width of the ankles of the wearer. The top half-layer is

composed of soft material such as the material used to make the straps 18-22, and so causes no bruises to the feet, to avoid causing bunions, corns, or blisters. In another embodiment, the straps 18-22 and the top half-layer forming the extension 44 may be composed of soft colored and/or colorful suede.

5           In an alternative embodiment, the straps 18-22 are not present, and the cushion 16 provides sufficient frictional engagement with the ball and/or ankle of the foot to retain the article 10 of footwear on the foot of the wearer without using straps 18-22. For example, as described herein in alternative embodiments shown in FIGS. 11-12, the cushion 16 may extend substantially about the entire periphery of the insole 38 to provide  
10   a moccasin-like arrangement to retain the article 10 on the foot.

          In a first alternative embodiment shown in FIG. 11, an article 50 of footwear includes a cushion 52 extending from the rear portion of the article 50 above the heel 54 toward the front portion of the article 50, and along at least a portion of the peripheral edge of the insole 56. In conjunction with the peripherally extending cushion 52, a  
15   retaining device 58 may optionally be provided for retaining a front portion of the foot of the user. The retaining device 58 may composed of fabric, leather, or any other known material.

          The retaining device 58 may optionally include a tab 60 or thong which may be positioned between at least one pair of toes of the user, such that the tab 60 retains the  
20   front portion of the foot substantially adjacent to the insole 56. Alternatively or in addition to the tab 60, straps as described herein and/or other known retaining means may be included in or with the retaining device 58. Accordingly, the foot is removably retained in the article 50 of footwear during use such as walking.

In the first alternative embodiment of FIG. 11, the cushion 52 may extend toward the front portion to terminate at or under the retaining device 58, as shown by the dotted lines in FIG. 11. In a second alternative embodiment shown in FIG. 12, an article 62 of footwear has a cushion 64 which may extend from above the heel 66 toward the front portion and under the retaining device 68 to terminate in front of the retaining device 68, for example, near the front end 70 of the article 64 of footwear. The front portions 72, 74 of the cushion 64 may taper as the front portions 72, 74 extend to terminate near the front end 70.

Accordingly, the disclosed article 10 of footwear combines the elevated heel of more formal footwear with the comfort of sneakers and sandals, with enhanced breathability and greater arch support than known footwear.